

*The CLERGY
farther Vindicated.*

A
S E R M O N

Preach'd in the
Cathedral-Church of *CANTERBURY*,

AT THE

Primary VISITATION
Of the Most Reverend Father in GOD,
WILLIAM L^d Arch-Bishop
(*Walde*) of *CANTERBURR*,

On Saturday June 16th, 1716.

By *ELIAS SYDALL, K.D. D.*
Prebendary of *CANTERBURY*, and one of
the Proctors for the Clergy of that Diocese.

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Vindicated
A.D. 1716
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2 C O R. iv. 5.

For we preach not our selves, but Christ Jesus the Lord ; and our selves your servants for Jesus sake.



N a former Discourse * on these Words, (which I presume I may refer to, because it has been made Publick) I undertook to Vindicate the present Ministers of Christianity, meaning those of the Protestant Profession, and particularly of the Church of *England*, from the Imputation of *preaching up themselves*; that is, seeking their own Worldly Glory, Interest and Advantage, or claiming to themselves any undue Powers, Privileges, Pre-eminence or Authority. And in order thereto, I endeavour'd to shew, *1st.* That we do not claim to our selves

* Printed for *J. Wyat*, An. 1715.

The CLERGY

any *Temporal* or Coercive Power or Jurisdiction. 2dly. That we do not pretend our selves to be exempt from the Temporal Power, or that either our Persons or Actions, as Clergy-men, are not subject to the Inspection and Cognizance, to the Direction and Government of the Civil Magistrate. 3dly. That we do not preach up such *Doctrines* as have been invented meerly to bring *Gain*, or *Power*, or *Honour* to our selves. 4thly. That we do not affect a *Dominion* over Mens *Minds* and *Consciences*, any more than over their *Bodies* and *Estates*, nor require an *Implicit Faith* or *Blind Obedience* from them. These Claims, Practices, and Doctrines seemed to me to be the principal Things on which such an Imputation could fairly be grounded: And I hope I have sufficiently shewn that we are *clear* and free from Blame *in these Matters*, and that None can justly lay any of *these* Things to our Charge.

There are some other Things, indeed, from which Unreasonable and Evil-minded Men may take occasion to reproach us as *preaching up our selves*; which we do not pretend to disown or deny, but do freely confess and acknowledge. But then they are such Things as, we presume, we have good Warrant for: And tho' some may from thence *take occasion*, yet we think we do not thereby give them any just *reason* to charge us with *preaching up our selves*. I shall give Instances in the following Particulars, which will take in the principal Things of this kind; viz,

I. We

- I. We do indeed *magnifie our Office*, and, upon proper Occasions, speak great Things concerning the Excellency and Dignity of our Function.
- II. We do assert the *Distinction* as well as the Dignity of our Office ; and do teach, That it is not common or free for every One to Exercise at pleasure, without being duly Call'd and Ordain'd to it, as well as Qualify'd for it.
- III. We do also teach, That, for the sake of our Office, a suitable *Regard* and *Reverence* is due to Us.

Now altho' we confess and acknowledge all this, yet we still plead *Not Guilty* of *preaching our selves* ; and we think it were very unreasonable and unjust to lay that odious Imputation upon us, on any of *these Accounts*. And this is what I would beg leave, on this Occasion, to endeavour more particularly to shew. And I would willingly hope that this Attempt will not be thought altogether *Unsuitable to the Occasion*, or *Unbecoming the Preacher* ; who, tho' he could not think it proper for him to be an Adviser or Reprover in this Audience ; yet he presumes he may have leave to be an *Advocate* for that Sacred Order into which (tho' unworthy) he has had the Honour to be admitted.

I. *First*

I. First then : We think we are not justly chargeable with *preaching up our selves*, tho' we do *magnifie our Office*, and, upon occasion, speak great Things of the Excellency and Dignity of our Holy Function.

We conceive we have Authority, both Divine and Human, sufficient to bear us out in this Matter. But we need not have recourse to any meer Human Writings to shew the Excellency and Dignity of our Ministry. It will be more unexceptionable, in this and all other such Cases, to make the Holy Scriptures our Rule, and *to speak as the Oracles of God*. And there are excellent and glorious Things enow spoken of our Office, in Scripture, to give a great and noble Idea of it.

Besides the proper Names respectively belonging to each particular Order, as *Apostle*, *Bishop*, *Elder or Presbyter* (which now, by contraction, we call *Priest*) there are other general Titles and figurative Appellations given in Holy Writ to the Ministers of the Gospel. Some of these, indeed, may seem to import no more than an Obligation to Labour and Diligence, and not to give any great Advantage to our Character, or any high Idea of our Office ; As, when we are called *Ministers* or *Officers*, and *Servants*, *Labourers* in God's *Husbandry*, and in his *Harvest*. But if it be consider'd *whose* Ministers and Servants we are said to be, and *whose Companions in Labour*, namely, the Servants and Ministers of God and

and Christ, * Labourers together with God, and † Workers together with Christ ; this alters the Case, and evidently implies great Honour and Dignity.

'Tis true, St. Paul, in the Text, does, in great Civility, call himself the *Corinthians SERVANT, for Jesus sake.* But it is; I believe, the only Instance of such a way of speaking : And in other Places he sufficiently explains what he means by it ; namely, not that he was properly *their Servant*, but that he had voluntarily *made himself so*, by some Condescensions and Compliances ; and particularly by *preaching to them the Gospel of God freely*, without receiving that *Maintenance* from them which he had a *Right to*, and which he actually receiv'd from other Churches ||.

It is the Observation of a very Learned and Pious Writer, ** " That whereas there are " three Words in the New Testament transla- " ted *Minister*, ($\Delta i\alpha\kappa o\nu \Theta$, $\Upsilon \pi\eta\epsilon\tau n s$, $\Lambda e\lambda s p y \delta s$,) " the first most frequent, not one of them is " given to the Apostles, with relation to the " Church or People. You shall never, (says " he) find them call'd Ministers of the " Church, which is so frequent with us ; but " either Ministers of God or of Christ, or " Ministers of *that* which they minister, as " Ministers of the *New Testament* and of the

* 1 Cor. iii. 9.

& 2 Cor. xi. 7.

† 2 Cor. vi. 1.

** Mr. Mede, Book 1. Disc. 5.

|| 1 Cor. ix. 19.

"*Gospel*; but not Ministers of *them* to whose
" behoof they minister." There is indeed
one (and I think but one) Exception to this,
which seems to have escaped the notice of this
excellent Author; but *that* will not much
diminish the force of the general Observation,
and possibly that single Passage * might fairly
be construed in a sense agreeable to it. How-
ever, certain it is, the Titles generally given
in the New Testament to the Ministers of the
Gospel, with relation to the *Church or People*,
are (Προεστῶτες, Ἡγέμονοι, Ποιμῆνες, Ἐπίσκοποι, i. e.)
Presidents or Persons set over them in the Lord,
Rulers or Guides, Pastors, Inspectors or Over-
seers † of them; which, instead of Subjection
or Servility, plainly denote a Pre-eminence and
Superiority.

But to proceed: There are other Titles and Appellations, which as they suppose Care and Diligence, because they import a great Trust, so they carry in them undeniable Characters of great Excellency and Dignity in the Ministry: Such are the Titles of || *Stewards of God* and of *his Mysteries*, and ||| *Ambassadors for or in the stead of Christ*. To these we may add the Title of *Angels* ‡‡, given to the *Bishops* of the Seven Churches of *Asia*; which may reasonably be understood to imply as well the great Dignity and Excellency of their Office,

* Coloss. i. 25.

† 1 Thess. v. 13. 1 Tim. v. 17.

Hebr. xiii. 17, 24. 1 Pet. v. 2. Acts xx. 28, &c.

|| Tit. i. 7. 1 Cor. iv. 1.

||| 2 Cor. v. 20.

‡‡ Rev. chap. ii. & iii.

as their Divine Mission and Authority. And it ought not to seem strange that *this Title* is given to the Ministers of the Gospel. For what the *Apostle*, in his Epistle to the *Hebrews*, speaks of *Angels*, may very truly be said of *them*; *Are they not sent forth to minister to those who shall be Heirs of Salvation?* *Hebr. i. 14.*

It must not be dissembled, that some of the foregoing Characters, in the strictness of their Signification, may seem to belong properly and peculiarly to the *Apostles*, and their first and immediate Successors in the Ministry; to whom the Gospel was first communicated, and who were *put in trust* ^{1 Thess. ii. 4.} *with it*, (as St. Paul speaks) and sent to *preach* or publish it, before ever it was committed to Writing, and when it could no otherwise be known, but from them. Undoubtedly *they* were, in the strictest and most emphatical sense, *Stewards of the Mysteries of God*, and *Ambassadors for Christ*.

But yet, on the other side, it cannot, without the greatest Perverseness, be denied, that these and such-like Characters, tho' they were *primarily* given, and may, in the strictest sense, most properly belong to the *Apostles*, and those who were God's first Instruments in planting and establishing Christianity in the World; yet, in a larger sense, they are truly applicable, and may in proportion be given, to all the succeeding, and so to the present Ministers of the Gospel.

For tho' we are not *Stewards of the Mysteries of God and Christ*, in the same strict sense as *they* to whom they were first communicated and committed, especially since these Mysteries have not been deliver'd down in Trust to *Us* only, (for, by the good Providence and Direction of God, they were soon put in Writing, and in every One's Power to know and be acquainted with;) yet we are so far *Stewards* and Dispensers of them, that it is our Office and Charge, and we are put in Trust and Commission *publickly* and *authoritatively* to declare and set them forth, to open and explain them to Men, and to reprove and convince the *Corrupters* or *Gainsayers* of them. Tho', since the *glad Tidings of Salvation* by Christ, and the Terms of Reconciliation betwixt God and Man, have been recorded in the Books of the New Testament, (which are, or ought to be, in every One's hands) we are not God's *Ambassadors* in the same precise Notion as they who were first commission'd and sent to propose these glad Tidings and Terms to the World; yet we are so far *Ambassadors for Christ* *, (as the *Apostle* speaks) that it is our Business to *pray Men in Christ's stead*, and perswade them in his Name and by his Authority, to embrace these Tidings, and to close with these Terms, and so to be *reconciled to God*. So that, as a † Learned Man expresses it, " If the *Apostles* were more

* 2 Cor. v. 20.

† Dr. Barrow, Vol. I. Serm. 12.

" properly

" properly God's *Ambassadors*, yet the present
" Ministers of Religion are at least his *Agents*
" and *Residents* here among Men, designed to
" pursue the same *Negotiations*, which were
" commenced or begun by them.

So again, Tho' we do not now *first* make known the *Way of Salvation to the World*; yet since it is our Office to Instruct, and Guide, and Direct Men in it, to Reclaim and Convert Sinners from the *Error of their Ways*, and to Exhort and Perswade Those who are in the right Way, to persevere and continue therein: Since we are appointed by Divine Authority to help forward the great Design of God in the *Gospel*, namely, the *Salvation of Men*, (as far as Instruction, and Perswasion, and administering to Men the Means of Grace, can do it;) and since it is our great Employ to carry on that very Work which was begun by our Blessed Saviour, * *to seek and to save that which was lost*, and † *to call Sinners to Repentance*: We may, without any Abuse of the Terms, stile ourselves *Workers together with God and Christ*; and may very justly be said to || *save those that hear us*, and submit to our Guidance and Ministry, as well as the Apostles and first Preachers of Christianity. *We are, under God and Christ, the Instruments and Means of Mens Salvation*; and *They were no more*. And if we be *faithful* in the discharge of our Office; if we teach

* Luke xix. 10.

† Matth. ix. 13.

|| 1 Tim. iv. 16.

Men to observe whatsoever God has commanded us; if we do not corrupt the Word of God, but speak the Truth as it is in Jesus; we may truly say of ourselves, as they did of themselves, *We are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish.* To the one we are the favour of death unto death; and to the other, the favour of life unto life, 2 Cor. ii. 15, 16.

And now, what higher and more honourable Busines can mortal Men be employ'd in? What Office can really be of greater Excellency and Dignity, than to be the Ministers and Messengers of God to Men, for their Spiritual and Eternal Good? to be His Ambassadors or Agents to transact and treat with Men about Things of the highest Importance, to wit, the Terms of their Peace and Reconciliation with God? to be set over Men in the Lord, to be appointed by Him to watch for Mens Souls, to be their Rulers or Guides in Things pertaining to God, and to be his Instruments in promoting and procuring their Everlasting Welfare and Happiness?

We shou'd have very good Human Authority and Reason for it, if, in point of real and *intrinsick* Worth and Excellency, we should compare, and even preferr, our Office to the highest Temporal Dignities. It is not unknown to this Learned Auditory what the Fathers have said on this Head: But because such Comparisons are not only unnecessary, but invidious, and have been abused and perverted,

verted, by Some, to the prejudice of *Civil Government*; I conceive it is better to stop here, and to content ourselves with what is spoken in *Scripture* concerning our Office and *Ministry*; which, we see, is abundantly sufficient to shew the transcendent Excellency and Dignity of it.

To come therefore home to our Point: Shall we be said to *preach up our selves*, or shall it be imputed to us that we seek only our own *Worldly Glory* or *Interest*, because we have a just Regard to our *Ministry*, and do sometimes *magnifie* and speak great Things of that *Office* of which such glorious and excellent Things are spoken, and to which such honourable Titles and Appellations are given by the Spirit of God, in *Scripture*? Should we not, on the contrary, be unworthy of this high and heavenly Calling, if we had not a just Value and Esteem for it? Shou'd we not rather be accounted *Betrayers* of our *Trust*, and *Unfaithful* to God whom we have the Honour to *serve in the Gospel of his Son*, if we suffer'd our *Ministry* to be Ridicul'd and Run down, without speaking, what he has Authorized us to speak, in its Defence, and did not, upon all just Occasions, Assert the real Excellency and Dignity of it? And have there not been *too just* Occasions given for us to make this the Subject of our Discourses, sometimes, when we have been represented as an Order of Men of no greater and higher account than those we

we call *Parish-Clarks*; when our Office has been made a *Bye-word* and a *Reproach*, and that among such as would take it ill to be numbered with *David's* or *Solomon's Fools*, or counted either *Unbelievers* or *Irreligious*; and when Preaching, Praying, administering the Sacraments, every Part of our Sacred Function, have been made the Subject of Rallery and Ridicule, and such light and ludicrous Images and Comparisons have been drawn of them, as it would be a Profanation of this Place particularly to recite? Surely, none that call themselves *Christians*, I had almost said, no ingenuous or serious *Deists*, (if any such Creatures there be) none that have any Sense of a Deity and Religion, can blame us for Vindicating the Honour and Dignity of our Ministry, after such just Provocations given; provided we do not *stretch ourselves beyond our Line*, and *magnifie our Office* beyond Measure, or claim to ourselves any undue Power or Pre-eminence in virtue of it.

If it shall be said, That there are Some among us, who, in virtue of our Sacerdotal Office, contend for such Powers and Prerogatives as God hath either not *given* at all to *Men*, or such as belong'd only to him who was the *Son of God* as well the *Son of Man*, or were granted to no others but the Apostles and first Preachers of Christianity: Or if it shall be objected, That Some, (not content with such Appellations and Titles as the

Scriptures

Scriptures give to the Ministers of the Gospel) affect to stile themselves *Princes*, *Regents*, and *Sovereigns* in Spirituals, and wou'd seem to Vie with the Kings and Rulers of the World, and aim at a Pre-eminence and Authority like to Theirs, when our Blessed Lord seems to have caution'd the Apostles against such Aims. The Answer to all this, is, That we are not concern'd to vindicate such Persons, who have *so far* mistaken or departed from the Nations generally receiv'd amongst *Protestants*, but must leave them to get clear of the Imputation of *preaching up themselves*, as well as they can. And yet thus much I would beg leave to say, That considering how greatly our Function hath been disparaged and depressed by some Writers, it ought not to seem so great a Wonder; and it may be some extenuation of the Fault, if (by an immoderate Use of the Counterpoise) some *Others* have raised and exalted it as much, and been tempted to carry the Matter too far the other way. It is a very nice and difficult thing to keep a true *Mean*; it is the common Infirmity of Mankind, and it may very easily be the Misfortune of a well-meant Zeal, to run from one *Extreme* to the other.

But however this be, so long as we make the Holy Scripture our Rule, and attribute or assume no more to ourselves as Ministers
of

of Christ, than what we are warranted to do by that Original Charter of the Christian Church ; I presume we may be allow'd to vindicate and magnifie our Office, upon proper Occasions, without being thought to *preach up ourselves*, on that Account.

II. We conceive we are not justly obnoxious, or liable to that Imputation, tho' we do assert the *Distinction*, as well as Dignity of our Office ; and do teach, That it is not common or free for every Man to Exercise at pleasure, without being duly Call'd and Ordain'd to it, as well as Qualify'd for it.

That meer Gifts and Abilities, tho' never so extraordinary and *miraculous*, were not thought a sufficient Warrant for the Exercise of the Ministry, in the Beginning of Christianity, without a solemn *Separation* and Appointment thereto, is very plain from Scripture, and the Practice of our Saviour and his Apostles. And there is no Reason to be given, why such a *Separation* should not be as necessary now, but what will hold equally against any Ministry at all.

But tho' the Scriptures were not so full and clear, yet Reason itself might satisfie us in this Case. For there is nothing more inconsistent with *Decency* and *Order*, (which, sure, are as necessary in Sacred as well as Secular Matters) than for Men to Usurp the Publick

lick Offices in any Society or Community, meerly because they think themselves fit for them. No Society, no Community, Ecclesiastical or Civil, could even *subsist* under such Disorder and Confusion. Besides, The very Notion of an *Office*, includes a distinct *Power* and *Authority*, as well as a peculiar Business and Trust; and therefore, to say that the Ministers or Officers in the Christian Churh have no *Power* but what every other Christian may ordinarily and lawfully exercise, (as the Maligners and Despisers of Us and our Ministry do) is all one as to say there are *no* such Officers, or that *all* are Officers; which are *both* very great Absurdities, contrary to Reason as well as Scripture, inconsistent with the *Notion*, and, in their Consequences, destructive of the very *Being*, of a *Church*.

Have we not great reason then to Assert the *Distinction* of our Office? And shall we be charged with *preaching up ourselves*, for insisting upon a regular Separation and Appointment thereto, and declaring against an irregular Intrusion into it? Have not Men the same Notions and Sentiments with regard to *Civil Offices* and *Places of Trust* and *Authority*, tho' but of *Human Institution*, as We have of Ours, which is *Divine*? Does any but an *Enthusiast* or a *Mad-man* think he has a Right to take upon him any *Office Civil* or *Military*, without being regularly chosen,

chosen, appointed, or commission'd there-to? And wou'd they who have the Honour to bear any such Offices, be censur'd as seeking only their own Interest or Glory, for opposing such an Usurpation? Wou'd they not rather be commended, as vindicating the Honour and Authority of that *Higher Power* by whose Commission they act? And why may not We, who have our Commission from God and Christ, expect the Favour, or rather the *Justice*, of a like equitable Construction of our Actions?

Nay, farther, In some meer *Professions* and *Trades*, which carry no proper *Authority* with them, but only require *Skill* and *Ability*, is it not generally thought most reasonable that every One should not be allow'd to practise them at pleasure, but only such as have been educated and train'd up to them? Are there not Provisions made by Laws, sometimes, in that behalf? Are not Men regularly *licens'd* and admitted to practise some of them? And can They be justly blamed, as unduly seeking their own Advantage only, who desire to have such good Orders and wise Regulations observ'd?

Now, where is the Hurt, where is the Iniquity of it? Or is it any thing but what is meet and right, if this be *more strictly* insisted on with regard to our Holy Function?

And

And why shou'd We, above all other Men, be liable to any unkind and odious Imputations, for declaring against any irregular Usurpations of our Ministerial Office, which, as it is of Divine Institution, so, if duly considered, is of as great Excellency and Dignity in itself, of as great Moment and Importance to Mankind, and requires as great Abilities to be eminent and shine, and make a Figure in it, as any other Function or Profession whatsoever?

It may not be unworthy of a short Remark here, That our chief Adversaries and Opponents, in this Point, are the *Enthusiasts* and *Free-thinkers*. These are the Men that maintain there is nothing in the Ministerial Office, but what is every Christian's Business, and what may be done as well, and with as much Authority, by any Man that is able to do it, as by a Minister lawfully Call'd and Ordain'd; and that it would be as well for the Christian World, if there were neither Bishop, Priest, nor Deacon in it. It is very probable, that they who call themselves *Free-thinkers*, would esteem it no Reproach to be compared with *Corah* and his *Company*, whom they may look upon as a Set of brave, gallant Spirits, that scorn'd to be *Priest-ridden*. But to give into the Opinions and Sentiment of *Quakers*, of *Fanatics* properly so call'd, and *Enthusiasts*, this does not seem to agree so well with their Character, who would be thought the

farthest that can be from *Fanaticism* or *Enthusiasm*, and seem ready to forego all Piety or Religion, that they may avoid any such Imputation. This may look like a strange kind of *Symbolizing*: But the Mystery of it is no more than this, That what may be the Effect of pure Ignorance in most *Enthusiasts*, perhaps of Pride in some, seems to be down-right Spite and Malice in *Free-thinkers*, who having no Kindness at all for Religion, especially that which we call *Reveal'd Religion*, will take any Part whatsoever against the Ministry, which is God's chief Instrument in preserving and promoting it. For this Cause *are they so maliciously set against Us*, and seem to *hate us right sore, even as tho' we were their greatest Enemies.*

But to return: It would probably be urged here by these Men, That tho' our Office should be *distinct*, not common or free for any Man to exercise at pleasure, without a regular Appointment thereto; yet why do we engross and confine this Power of Separating and Ordaining Ministers to *our selves*? To which the plain Answer is this; That we think it very evident, even from Holy Scripture, as well as the subsequent Practice of the Christian Church, that *this* was the *ordinary Way* in which the Author of our Religion intended the Ministry should be continued. It is not to our present Purpose to determine which of the *particular Orders* or

or Degrees of Ministers this Power is lodg'd with, or what may be done in *extraordinary* Emergencies and Cases of Necessity. But that in *general* the Ministry was *ordinarily* to continue itself in this Method, we conceive to be as clear, as that it was to be continued at all, or that there was to be any *Visible* Church. Nay, it seems most agreeable to Reason, and the Nature of the Thing, that the Candidates for Admission into any Profession, should be Tried and Admitted by those of the same Profession, especially by such as are most eminent in it. This is what is done in other Professions of the greatest Note: And if there were no more to be said for our Right of *Ordaining* or *Separating*, and Admitting Men to the Ministry, than this, (tho' there is a great deal more) it were sufficient to justifie us in pleading for it.

III. We trust all unprejudiced Persons will acquit us from the Charge of *preaching up ourselves*, tho' we do teach, That, for the sake of our Office, a suitable *Regard* and *Reverence* is due to us. This is a Tribute due, of Course, to such as bear any Office of Importance and Dignity, and is readily enough paid to *others*, and therefore is very unjustly refus'd or grudg'd with respect to *us*. Besides Obedience and Submission to the Ministers of the Gospel, as Persons set over Men

in the Lord, to be their *Guides* and *Governours* in Spiritual Things, the Scripture teaches Men to esteem them also, and that *very highly, and in love too, for their Works sake,* *I Thess. v. 12, 13.* And certainly, if any Work, any Office deserves the highest Esteem and Love, it is that of the Sacred Ministry; which, as it was founded by the highest Authority, namely, of God and Christ, and is conversant about Matters of the greatest Importance and Excellency, to wit, Things pertaining to God, and to his Worship and Service; so it is, in its End and Design, the most beneficial to Men, being the Ordinary Means appointed by God to make them *wise unto Salvation*, and to guide and conduct them *in the Way* that leads to Life Everlasting. So that however Men may be carried with the Stream of general Custom and Fashion, to shew too little Esteem and Regard for the Ministers of Religion, in their *outward Practice* or Behaviour; yet in their *inward Judgments* and Consciences none can gravely despise or think meanly of their Office, or deliberately deny the Regard and Reverence due to them for the sake thereof, except such as have very little Sense or Knowledge, or as little Belief or Esteem of the Things about which it is conversant. Men must either be sunk *below*, or set *against* all Religion, who can in good earnest despise and disparage the Ministers of it; unless, with

with the *Enthusiasts*, they think themselves so perfect, as to be got beyond all outward Religion, and to be above all *Ordinances* and Means of Grace. If our Office were no other than an *Human Institution*; if our Ministry were not from *Heaven*, but of *Men* only; still a great Regard and Reverence would be due to us on the Account of it. How much more, when our Office is of *Divine Appointment*, when we act by a *Divine Commission* and Authority, and are not the Servants or Officers of *Men*, but Ministers and Agents of the *Great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ*.

Under this Head I would beg leave to take notice of the Way and Manner of *some Persons*, who will profess a great Reverence and Veneration for our *Order*, and for the *Good Men* of it, such as they reckon live and act up to their Character: But as for others, who they judge do not so, they seem to think themselves at liberty, or rather *oblig'd*, to expose all such as much as they can, and treat them with the utmost Scorn and Indignity. This, surely, is not altogether right; but the worst of the Case is, these Men are usually so nice and so humoursome in the Matter, that there are *few* (very few, perhaps *not twenty* in such a National Church as this) whom they count *Good Men* of our *Order*, and worthy of the Honour due unto it. So that, in effect, whatever

whatever Regard they may have for our Order in the abstract Notion of it, we are but very little the better for it, and are generally us'd as despitefully and disdainfully by them, as by our most open and avowed Enemies. Now, if these Persons (who are so cautious of over-doing, in point of Reverence and Regard to us) mean only that they cannot have that *inward, cordial Esteem* and Veneration for a careless or vicious Minister, as for one that *taketh heed to himself and to his Doctrine, in all things shewing himself a Pattern of good Works*; they are desired to remember, that neither GOD nor Man hath *required this at their Hands*. But because they cannot *inwardly* or equally esteem us *all*, it will not follow that therefore they have a Right *openly* to vilifie or shew Disrespect or Contempt of *any* of us.

The Duty of Men in this Case is plain enough, if they were willing to understand it. If any of us be notoriously, scandalously, and intolerably Bad, (of which sort, we trust, there are but very few) *the Law is open*, our *Bishops*, and other Ecclesiastical *Ordinaries* or *Superiors*, have their *Jurisdictions* and their *Courts*, where we may be call'd to Account; and 'tis the Business of these *Visitations* to enquire into *our Behaviour*, as well as that of others. Therefore, instead of treating us in general, with Contempt and Obloquy (as is too usual) let Men regularly *Present* or *Accuse*

Accuse such of us as really deserve it, before our Superiors ; and Means will be found either to reform us and reclaim us from our Faults, or else to remove us from our Places.

But if a Clergy-man be guilty only of Weaknesses and Infirmities, (for we have this great Treasure or Trust only in Earthen Vessels, as the Apostle speaks, that is, We are but Men of like Passions and Fraughties with Others, notwithstanding the Grace that is given or the Favour that is done unto us, in Calling Us to this High Office :) Or if a Minister be guilty of real Faults, and yet, as it may happen, Men are unwilling to make him a public Example, or to proceed to Extremities against him ; let them, for the sake of God and Religion, endeavour to cover his Infirmities, and conceal those Faults which they do not think flagrant enough to be punished. And let them learn to distinguish betwixt the Minister and the Man, and passing by his Personal Fraughties or Faults, give him the Honour due to his sacred Function and Office. This Distinction is not so very subtil or so purely speculative, but that Men can easily apprehend it, and practise it too, in some other Cases, particularly that of Magistrates. And certainly, a due Concern for the Honour of God and Religion, (which must ordinarily suffer as much by the Reproach of his Ministers, as that of a Prince and his

Government by the Contempt of his *inferior Magistrates*) would prompt Men to (at least) an equal Tenderness in our Case.

I would not be misunderstood here, as if I were insinuating that the Faults of us Clergy-men are less heinous or more excusable than those of other Men: I am afraid they are more *inexcusable*, and will bring a heavier Judgment upon us at the Great Day of Account. But the same may be said of the Faults of other Persons in Stations of Eminence and Superiority, who, the higher they are exalted, ought to be so much the greater Examples, as well as Instruments, of Good to Mankind. And yet it cannot justly be inferr'd from thence, that Men have a Right, on account of their Personal Faults, to withhold from them the Honour and Respect due to their Stations, much less to treat them with Contempt and Indignity.

But (to return from this, I hope not very impertinent Digression, to my main Point) it may probably be thought, That tho' there is a great Regard and Reverence due to Us, on the account of our Office, yet it does not so well become *Us* to plead and contend for it; it looks too much like *preaching up our selves*, to insist upon this Point, and we never find this done by Persons in other Places of Dignity and Authority. To this, I presume, it might with great Truth be answer'd, That Men generally seem

seem to have a better sense of their Duty in *other Relations*, than they have with regard to the *Ministers of Religion*. But however this be, the Answer I wou'd chuse to give is this ; That since it is our Business and our Charge, to instruct Men in the Nature, to shew them the Reasons and Obligations, and perswade them to the Practice of *every Duty* belonging to them in their several Relations ; it would be a *vicious Modesty* in us, and it were very unreasonable to require us, to be altogether silent concerning that Regard and Reverence which Holy Scripture as well as Reason, and the Nature of the thing, shews to be due to Us. Especially, if it be consider'd, that such Regard and Reverence are fundamentally necessary to the Success of our Ministry ; and that it is impossible for Men to profit and be *edified* by Us, if we be despised or *lightly esteemed* by Them. It is, in truth, as much for *their Own Good*, as for any Advantage of Ours, that Men should have a due Regard and Esteem for Us. For without this, all that *We* can lose, is only a little present Comfort and Satisfaction, which may be made up to Us in the Increase of our future Reward ; but *They* must lose all the Benefit which God design'd by the Institution of our Ministry, and may thereby endanger their own Eternal Salvation,

So that if our Office be either Necessary or Useful to Men, (which cannot be denied, without impeaching the Wisdom of God in the Institution of it, and which none but Enthusiasts or Enemies to all Religion will deny) it is as necessary and useful that Men should be made sensible of the Regard and Reverence that is due to it. And nothing can be more disingenuous and unjust, than to interpret our Preaching what is so necessary for the Good of Souls, and in the end conduces to Mens Eternal Welfare, to be only a *preaching up our selves.* Besides, if Men wou'd be perswaded to consider, that the Regard or Contempt that is shewn to Us, for the sake of our Office, is, in effect, shewn to God, and that He Himself hath expressly declared He so takes and interprets it, (in Passages of Scripture * so well known, that I need not stay to quote them) they wou'd find themselves oblig'd rather to give us Thanks, than cast Reflections and Reproaches upon us, for putting them in mind, sometimes, of that Duty, the Neglect whereof is not only a little present Discouragement and Mortification to Us, but tends to their Own Damnation and Destruction. For as God will undoubtedly vindicate his own Institutions at last; so how, in the Course of

* Matth. x. 40. Luke x. 13. John xiii. 26.

Things, can Men possibly be saved, whilst they disregard and despise the very Instruments and Means of their Salvation?

Thus I have finish'd what I proposed to offer upon this Occasion, in Vindication of our Office and Order; in which I have endeavoured to keep a due Mean, and to avoid Extremes: And therefore, I hope, what has been said, will be candidly understood, and seriously consider'd.

The USE I should make of All (if there were Time left for it) would be,

i. To encourage Us not to *Weary* or *Faint* in our *Minds*, but to go on diligent-
ly and cheerfully in fulfilling our *Ministry*, notwithstanding the *Calumnies* and *Contra-
diction* of *Sinners* and *Unbelievers*. Our
Lord himself *endured the same*; and if they
have reviled the *Master of the Household*, the
Servants must not expect better Treatment.
It * is a small Thing for us to be judged of
Man's Judgment, and it ought to give us no
great Pain what Men think or say of us,
provided we can approve our selves to God,
and be found *faithful* and *sincere* in his
sight. Our Reproach cannot be so great

* 1 Cor. iv. 3.

Here, but our Reward will be as great in Heaven; where (tho' their Glory may sometimes be diminish'd and obscured in this World) † they that be Wise, [or Teachers,] shall shine as the brightness of the Firmament; and they that turn many to Righteousness, as the Stars for ever and ever.

2. Another Use of what has been said, should be, to engage others, not lightly to give heed to the malicious Suggestions and Insinuations of Evil-minded Men against us, or to entertain ill Opinions and unreasonable Jealousies of us, as tho' we preach'd, and fought, and meant nothing but our selves. And it might be hoped, that the People of this Land would look upon it as a fresh Obligation upon them to esteem and love their faithful Pastors; that God, by placing His Present MAJESTY on the Throne, and defearing the late Attempts of His Enemies to Depose Him, hath once more deliver'd this Nation from the Power and Tyranny of the Bishop of Rome and his Ecclesiastics; who may, with great Reason, be said to preach up themselves, who do indeed aim to be Lords over God's Heritage, and who are truly and undeniably guilty of those ambitious and selfish Designs, which are very unjustly charged, by too many, upon the Ministry

† Dan. xii. 3.

in general, especially upon the true *Protestant* and *Church-of-England* Clergy.

But it is high time that I should make way for the Business of the Day, and therefore, instead of any farther Application, I shall only pray, That both We, and the People committed to our Charge, may duly consider the great Dignity and Importance of our Office, that *we* may discharge it with *Uncorruptness*, *Gravity*, and *Sincerity*, and endeavour in all Things to approve our selves worthy of so high a Trust; and that *they*, having a just Regard and Reverence for it, may receive that Edification and Benefit by it, for which it was instituted and appointed; so that at the Last Day, that *Great Day of VISITATION*, when the Universal Head of the Church, the Great *Pastor* and *Bishop* of *our Souls*, shall cite us to appear before his Tribunal, both *we* and *they* may be able to give up our respective *Accounts with Joy*.

Which GOD grant, for JESUS CHRIST's sake; To Whom, with the FATHER and the HOLY SPIRIT, be all Honour, Praise, and Glory for Evermore. Amen.

F I N I S.



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